

AN ECUMENICAL COLLOQUIUM ON YVES CONGAR: HIS PNEUMATOLOGY

Although many references are made to Cardinal Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P. (1904–1995), throughout these *Proceedings*, one of the presidentially invited sessions focused on Congar's Pneumatology alone. This was unique in the history of the Catholic Theological Society of America. As far as we could determine, no annual meeting of the CTSA had had a session carved out just for Congar studies like this one.

Had this colloquium on Congar's theology been convoked even a year earlier, we might have had the opportunity to hear from him directly. As it so happened, though, he died on 22 June 1995. In his place, the following message from France was delivered to the gathering in San Diego: "The Dominicans who have been the closest to Fr. Yves Congar and his disciples are delighted with the Colloquium on Congar at the annual meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America."¹

The most important aspect of this gathering was that representatives of non-Catholic churches participate. The intention was to establish a precedent that any future Congar sessions in the CTSA would always be ecumenical. To remain true to Congar's "ecumenical vocation," colloquia dedicated to his theology should be characterized by both an ecumenical dimension and a dialogical dimension. A significant number of participants expressed the hope that a Congar Group, or even a Congar Society, within the CTSA would arise out of this special gathering.

Three papers were presented at this inaugural ecumenical colloquium on Yves Congar. They represented the views of theologians from three different Christian bodies. The first and main paper comes from an associate member of the CTSA, Mark E. Ginter, a Catholic layman and assistant professor of Systematic Studies at Sacred Heart School of Theology, Hales Corners, Wisconsin. The second paper was delivered by J. Robert Nelson, a Methodist minister and senior research fellow at the Institute of Religion at the Texas Medical Center, Houston, Texas. The third paper was presented by Michel Najim, an Orthodox priest and dean of St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral, Los Angeles, California. Unfortunately, only the first two participants submitted a paper for publication.

¹Personal correspondence from Pierre-Marie Gy, O.P., to Mark E. Ginter, 14 April 1996.

Since the overriding concern of this first Congar colloquium was its ecumenical dimension, these three papers do not directly dialogue with each other. Rather, they present three different views on aspects of Congar's pneumatology. The open dialogue which followed the presentation of these papers among the speakers and the participants centered on concerns raised in the second and third papers about Trinitarian theology as expressed in the Christian East and Christian West. In the main, the goal of the first paper, that is, to arrive at an anthropological thesis foundationally acceptable to most all Christians, was accepted without comment.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND MORALITY: A DYNAMIC ALLIANCE

How is one to begin the first paper in an invited CTSA session dedicated exclusively to the most influential Catholic theologian on ecumenism in the twentieth century?² What can one say to honor properly the achievements of the foremost Catholic theologian on the Holy Spirit since the thirteenth century scholastics?³ From where can one find the words to extol appropriately the

²Avery Dulles, "Yves Congar: In Appreciation," *America* 173 (15 July 1995): 6-7.

³The following list of Congar's writings on the Holy Spirit can hardly be matched by any other Catholic theologian since the High Middle Ages (in order of relative length): *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3 vols, trans. David Smith (New York: Seabury, 1983); *The Word and the Spirit*, trans. David Smith (New York: Harper & Row, 1987); *Esprit de l'homme, Esprit de Dieu* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1983); "The Church and Pentecost," and "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic Body, Continuators of the Work of Christ," in *The Mystery of the Church*, trans. A. V. Littledale, 1-57, 147-86 (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1960); "Pneumatologie dogmatique," in *Initiation à la pratique de la théologie*, vol. 2, ed. B. Lauret and F. Refoulé, 483-516 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1983); "Holy Spirit and Spirit of Freedom," in *Laity, Church and World*, trans. Donald Attwater, 1-34 (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1960); "Le Saint-Esprit dans la théologie thomiste de l'agir moral," in *Thomas d'Aquin: sa vision de théologie et de l'Eglise*, XI.9-19 (London: Variorum Reprints, 1984); "Pneumatology Today," *The American Ecclesiastical Review* 167 (1973): 435-49; "Renewed Actuality of the Holy Spirit," *Lumen vitae* 28 (1973): 13-30; "The Holy Spirit in the Church," in *The Revelation of God*, trans. A. Manson and L. C. Sheppard, 148-67 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968); "Actualité de la Pneumatologie," in *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum*, International Theological Congress on Pneumatology, 1:15-28 (Vatican: Liberia Editrice, 1983); "Le troisième article du symbole. L'impact de la pneumatologie dans la vie de l'Eglise," in *Dieu, Eglise, Société*, ed. J. Doré, 287-309 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1985); "Saint-Esprit en théologie catholique," in *Vocabulaire Ecuménique*, ed. Yves Congar, 197-210 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1970); "Pneumatologie ou 'christomonisme' dans la tradition latine," in *Ecclesia a Spiritu Sancto edocta. Mélanges Gérard Philips*, 41-64 (Gembloux: Duculot, 1970); "Pneumatologie et théologie de l'Histoire," in *La théologie de l'Histoire. Herméneutique et eschatologie. Colloque Castelli 1971*, 61-70 (Rome: Aubier, 1971); "Les implications christologiques et pneumatologiques de l'ecclésiologie de Vatican II," in *Le Concile de Vatican II. Son Eglise. Peuple de Dieu et Corps du Christ*, 163-76 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984); "Bulletin de théologie aperçus de pneumatologie," *Revue des sciences philo-*

theologian whose writings were "extensive enough to sustain the thinking of an ecumenical Council?"⁴ It is my awesome and very humbling task to inaugurate this ecumenical colloquium on Cardinal Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P. (1904-1995). Very conscious of my limitations to pay him proper homage, I hope that the following brief exposition of a particular dimension of Congar's pneumatology reveres the remarkable contributions this French Dominican has made "in the service of the People of God."⁵

Hoping to advance ecumenism, we intend to show that Christian unity can be enhanced in the area of Christian ethics with reference to pneumatology.⁶ Specifically, we will argue, based on the pneumatological anthropology of Yves Congar, that there exists an intrinsic relationship between moral conscience and the Holy Spirit.⁷ In this dynamic alliance between conscience and the Spirit, the Christian is enlightened to know the true good and empowered to act according to this good. Although Congar never focuses on this thesis as stated, his approach to a theology of the Holy Spirit so magnificently synthesizes Orthodox, Protestant, and Pentecostal perspectives that we anticipate a general agreement among Christians on this thesis. If our task is successful to any degree, we will have made a modest contribution to undoing one of the stickiest points on the road to visible unity. Congar exhorts us: "Unbelievers are far more scandalized than we realize by the divisions amongst Christians. Although, unfortunately, we cannot yet show a united front, when we show that we are moving in that

sophiques et théologiques 62 (1978): 421-42; "Theology of the Holy Spirit and Charismatic Renewal," in *Called to Life*, trans. William Burridge, 75-87 (New York: Crossroad, 1987); "Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit," trans. Paul Burns, *Concilium* 99 (1984): 47-57; "Renewal of the Spirit and Reform of the Institution," trans. J. Griffiths, *Concilium* 73 (1972): 39-49; "La pneumatologie dans la théologie catholique," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 51 (1967): 250-58; "The Call to Ecumenism and the Work of the Holy Spirit," in *Dialogue Between Christians: Catholic Contributions to Ecumenism*, trans. Philip Loretz, 100-106 (Westminster MD: Newman Press, 1966); "Chronique de pneumatologie," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 64 (1980): 445-51; "Preface," in *The Christian Lives by the Spirit*, by I. de la Potterie and S. Lyonnet, trans. J. Morriss, v-ix (Staten Island NY: Alba House); "Introduction," in *L'Esprit Saint. Lettre encyclique de Jean Paul II, 'L'Esprit qui donne la vie'*, vii-xv (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1986); "On the Communion and Communication of the Holy Spirit," trans. Mark E. Ginter, *Forefront* 3 (Spring 1996): 27-28.

⁴Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, "Forum: Yves Congar, O.P., Man of Unity," *Doctrine and Life* 45 (1995): 249.

⁵Jean-Pierre Jossua, *Yves Congar: Theology in the Service of God's People*, trans. Sister Mary Jocelyn (Chicago: Priory Press, 1968).

⁶In an effort to take the criticism of Christomonism seriously, Pneumatology is always capitalized to show that the Holy Spirit is equal in dignity to Christ.

⁷Mark E. Ginter, "Conscience and Holy Spirit: A Theological Anthropology Applied to Mental Health Care Ethics" (forthcoming diss., Marquette University).

direction and that dissension and misunderstanding among Christians is at an end, then the world listens."⁸

I. PNEUMATOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Without question, Congar's trilogy *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (hereafter IBHS)⁹ typifies the erudition of his theological methodology. Although we cannot give our full attention here to explaining his methodology, we hope that our procedure faithfully exemplifies it.¹⁰ Within the given limitations, we will focus on the second volume of IBHS, part two: "The Breath of God in our Personal Lives." In this part, Congar presents his pneumatological anthropology. He does not explicitly use this phrase until his last monograph on the Holy Spirit, *The Word and the Spirit*.¹¹ Yet, all of the pieces were curiously in place since Vatican II for Congar to have actually used this phrase "pneumatological anthropology." He opens part 2 with a narrative about a lunch conversation he had with a couple of Orthodox Christian theologian observers during the first session of the council.¹² The council fathers had been discussing the Schema *De Ecclesia*, which became *Lumen gentium* (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*). As the Orthodox observed the proceedings, the content of the speeches was excessively juridical in their descriptions of the Church. Rather, the Orthodox theologians suggested that if they had the opportunity they would propose a schema with only two chapters: the first on pneumatology, and the second on Christian anthropology. While the story about the council introduces part two, Congar gleaned a significant lesson from that encounter but only succeeded in putting those two words together into a descriptive phrase many years later. It is our blessing to profit now in hindsight from those many years of intellectual and spiritual rigor to hammer out a facet of this pneumatological anthropology.

Pneumatological anthropology is a specification of Congar's "theology for man and anthropology for God." Congar's description of this comes from within

⁸Congar, "The Call to Ecumenism and the Work of the Holy Spirit," 101.

⁹Hereafter abbreviated IBHS.

¹⁰While doing research for my dissertation, I have labeled his methodology "Evangelical Thomism," having the following characteristics: it is biblical, ecumenical, ecclesiological, truthful, faithful, historical, traditional, dialectical, mystical, practical and pastoral. The explanation of Congar's method and the rationale for each of these characteristics is a work in progress separate from my dissertation.

¹¹On p. 122, Congar mentions that Nikos Nissiotis uses this same jargon, but, since Congar uncharacteristically does not provide a reference, we have been unable to track down exactly to which work of Nissiotis Congar refers.

¹²He recounts this story in other places as well. See his preface, in *The Christian Lives by the Spirit*, as well as his article "Pneumatology Today." In Yves Congar, *This Church That I Love*, trans. L. Delafuente (Denville NJ: Dimension Books, 1969) 21n.9, Congar identifies the Orthodox as Nikos Nissiotis and Fr. Alexander Schmemmann.

the context of Christian social ethics. Between the turn of the century and Vatican II, a desire to be with the poor came to the surface in the lives of significant Catholic personages like Dorothy Day, Emmanuel Mounier, Charles de Foucauld—and we might add Catherine de Hueck Doherty and Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

This rediscovery of poverty as a value in the Christian life occurred spontaneously on the social level. That is certainly connected with the present context of social Catholicism, of openness to the world, of solidarity with human suffering, but there is a deeper connection (at the heart of the theological tension and by way of inward demands) between existing for God and existing for mankind. The two are inseparable. The second commandment is not merely like the first, but *identical* with it. The Bible does not talk about God without talking about man, and vice versa. It is indivisibly theology for man and anthropology for God.¹³

This theological tension, expressed as “theology for man and anthropology for God,” Congar adapts from his friend, the Jewish theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel, who insisted, “[T]he Bible is God’s anthropology rather than man’s theology.”¹⁴ This theological tension Congar places at the top of the theologian’s priorities.

The most important work today is to show the unity between theology and anthropology. They are always related. . . . [Y]ou cannot separate God and man. In the Bible the affirmations about God are linked to the affirmations about man. And why should this be so? Because the content of revelation is not God as He is Himself, exactly. God revealed Himself in the temporal revelation of the Incarnation and established a unique relation between Himself and man.¹⁵

The theological tension itself is valuable. To abolish the tension by collapsing the relationship onto just one or the other side is to destroy the fundamental Christian belief that God shares in our life and we share in God’s life. This mutual solidarity reaches its climax in Jesus Christ the God-Man (*Theos/Θεός-Anthropos/Ἄνθρωπος*) who gives us His Spirit. Unfortunately, in a post-Christian intellectual environment, the tendency more often than not is to begin (and end!) anthropocentrically. With Congar, we share the reservation that this starting point could lead to skewed results.¹⁶ Maintaining this theological tension will help us transcend any reductionistic tendencies either by reducing inspirations of the Holy Spirit to every judgment of human moral conscience on the one hand, or

¹³Yves Congar, “Poverty as an Act of Faith,” *Concilium* 104 (1977): 100, emphasis original.

¹⁴Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1955) 412.

¹⁵“Interview with Yves Congar,” *America* 155 (6 May 1967): 677.

¹⁶*The Crucial Questions: On Problems Facing the Church Today* (New York: Newman Press, 1969).

by reducing judgments of human moral conscience to an oppressive code of precepts on the other hand. In other words, the theological tension provides the theological context for us to freely obey the demanding law of the Spirit and to freely reject the passive subservience to noncommittal. Congar gives us the example of St. Francis of Assisi (1182–1226) as one whose life of poverty was lived in a theological context. It was “the exercise of an absolute vertical dependence on the Father who cares for men, flowers and animals. That is why this vertical relationship transforms horizontal relations.”¹⁷

At all costs, Congar wants to avoid proposing any kind of individualistic pneumatological anthropology. He demonstrates this by beginning the second volume of IBHS with his pneumatological ecclesiology. As far as a specialization in theology, Congar is most well known for his ecclesiology.¹⁸ But one should

¹⁷Congar, “Poverty as an Act of Faith,” 101.

¹⁸This has been the predominant theme among dissertations on his theology. See Dimas Lara Barbosa, *The Apostolicity of the Church and Its Theological Foundations According to Yves Congar, O.P.* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1994); Iakovos Canavaris, “The Ecclesiology of Yves M.-J. Congar: An Orthodox Evaluation” (unpubl. diss., Boston University, 1968); Raoul Dederen, “Apostolic Succession in the Writings of Yves Congar and Oscar Cullman” (unpubl. diss., Andrews University, 1993); Doris Ann Grottemoeller, R.S.M., “The Theory of Development of Dogmas in the Ecclesiology of Yves Congar” (unpubl. diss., Fordham University, 1976); Diane Jagdeo, “Holiness and Reform of the Church in the Writings of Yves Congar, O.P.” (unpubl. diss., Catholic University of America, 1986); Thomas Joseph Lehning, “The Foundations, Functions and Authority of the Magisterium in the Theology of Yves Congar, O.P.” (unpubl. diss., Catholic University of America, 1985); Charles MacDonald, *Church and world in the plan of God: aspects of history and eschatology in the thought of Père Yves Congar, O.P.*, Regensburger Studien zur Theologie, vol. 27 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1982); Timothy I. MacDonald, *The Ecclesiology of Yves Congar: Foundational Themes* (Washington DC: University Press of America, 1983); John Howard Stoneburner, “The Doctrine of the Church in the Theology of Yves Congar, O.P.” (unpubl. diss., Drew University, 1961); Kenneth E. Untener, *The Church-World Relationship According to the Writings of Yves Congar, O.P.*, Excerpta ex dissertatione ad doctoratum (Rome: Gregorian University, 1976).

Ecumenism, as a dimension of Congar’s ecclesiology, has been the focus of several dissertations: Richard J. Beauchesne, “Laité and Ministry in Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P.: Evolution, Evaluation and Ecumenical Perspective” (preface by Yves Congar) (unpubl. diss., Boston University, 1975); Christopher Olof Meakin, “*The Same But Different?*” *The Relationship between Unity and Diversity in the Theological Ecumenism of Yves Congar* (Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press, 1995); Richard C. Meredith, “Themes of Thomistic Eschatology in the Ecumenical Theology of Yves Congar” (unpubl. diss., Catholic University of America, 1993); Monika-Maria Wolff, *God and Human Being: The Contribution of Yves Congar to the Ecumenical Dialog* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1989).

not get the impression that his ecclesiology abstracts from individual persons. Rather, the "progressive" character of his ecclesiology was to rediscover the personal dimension of the Church in the tradition. "The Holy Spirit is given to the community and individual persons. . . . The Church is in no sense a great system in which . . . the individual is simply the sum of a million divided by a million. It is a communion, a fraternity of persons. This is why a personal principle and a principle of unity are united in the Church. These two principles are brought into harmony by the Holy Spirit."¹⁹ Maintaining the proper balance between the Spirit who gives life to the Church and the breath of God in individual believers demands that these two aspects not become confused nor completely separated. Commenting on this tension between the communal and the personal, Aidan Nichols, O.P., writes, "A pneumatic ecclesiology will be in part a theological anthropology, for man is restored to the divine image by an *askēsis*, or discipline of purification, achieved through the Spirit, as well as by the Church's sacraments, whose agent is the Spirit, the Sanctifier."²⁰

The balance in Congar's pneumatological anthropology between a "theology for man and an anthropology for God" and between the community and the person is nothing less than the application of his Trinitarian theology to a theology of grace and a theology of the Church. Congar's pneumatological anthropology cannot be accused of being pneumatocentric or pneumatomonist, nor by contrast is it Christocentric or Christomonist. Rather, he is thoroughly Trinitarian. And since our only experience of the Trinity is from the economic missions of the Son and the Spirit, any approach to the relationship between God and humanity must equally reference God through the Son and the Spirit. "If I were to draw but one conclusion from the whole of my work on the Holy Spirit," Congar writes, "I would express it in these words: no Christology without pneumatology and no pneumatology without Christology."²¹ Thus, it is impossible to speak of

Other dissertations concentrate on Congar's Pneumatology: Joseph Areeplackal, *The Pneumatological Dimension of Ordained Ministry as Presented by Yves Congar and John Zizioulas* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1988); Anne Marie Harnett, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Constitutive and Ongoing Revelation according to Yves Congar" (unpubl. diss., Catholic University of America, 1989); Joseph Kallarangatt, *The Holy Spirit, Bond of Communion of the Churches: A Comparative Study of the Ecclesiology of Yves Congar and Nikos A. Nissiotis* (Rome, Gregorian University, 1989).

Other dissertations have focused on different aspects of Congar's theology: Stephen Patrick McHenry, "Three Significant Moments in the Theological Development of the Sacramental Character of Orders: Its Origin, Standardization, and New Direction in Augustine, Aquinas, and Congar" (unpubl. diss., Fordham University, 1983); William Henn, *The Hierarchy of Truths according to Yves Congar, O.P.*, (Rome: Gregorian University, 1987).

¹⁹IBHS, II:16.

²⁰Yves Congar (Wilton CT: Morehouse-Barlow, 1989) 158.

²¹Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, 1.

a pneumatological anthropology apart from Jesus Christ, God's Son and our Lord.

In St. Paul's letter to Titus we read, "He has saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life" (Tit. 3:5-7, RSV). Congar's comment follows:

The Spirit, then, is the principle realizing the "Christian mystery," which is the mystery of the Son of God who was made man and who enables us to be born as sons of God. Catholic theologians speak of "grace." In so doing, they run the risk of objectivizing it and separating it from the activity of the Spirit, who is uncreated grace and from whom it cannot be separated. Only God is holy, and only he can make us holy, in and through his incarnate Son and in and through his Spirit.²²

II. A DYNAMIC ALLIANCE

Up to this point, we seem to have set up Congar for a classic Catholic exposition on nature and grace. Congar admits, "We, perhaps, would start from the gospel of St. John; there we would find Catholicism as the religion of God's presence, of eternal life as a present fact. We are less attracted to the dialectic 'sin-grace' which permeates the Protestant outlook."²³ However, because we are concerned with the role of the Holy Spirit in living a moral life, the dialectic between sin and grace becomes particularly highlighted. Congar himself recognizes this fact, and marks out the way.

Biblically speaking, we rely upon the truth that has come down to us through the tradition about the "Fall of Humanity" as narrated in Genesis 3. Namely, that because all of humanity proceeds from Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:20-21), we experience ignorance about what is truly good as well as impotence to will what is truly good. "Things are not *truly*, they are not good and true except when, conformed to the creative Word of God, they realize His will and His plan."²⁴ The result of this event is that sin entered the world, and "each of us receives at birth a nature inclined to evil."²⁵ "If God's laws were observed there would be no wars. Nor would there be any quarrels, nor hatred in hearts, nor the evils due

²²IBHS, II:68-69.

²³Yves Congar, *The Revelation of God*, trans. A. Manson and L. C. Sheppard (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968) 41.

²⁴Yves Congar, *Jesus Christ*, trans. L. O'Neill (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966) 169, emphasis original.

²⁵Yves Congar, *The Catholic Church and the Race Question* (Paris: UNESCO, 1961) 15.

to drunkenness and misconduct, nor any crime at all. . . . All these things come from the abuse of our freedom."²⁶

In our state of fallenness, we experience God's precepts as exterior to ourselves, imposed upon us as a law.

Metaphysically, the relevant principle is this: so far as action does not coincide with its norm, a rule exterior to it is as work: a law or a pedagogy, so far as good does not fully reside in our freedom; an instruction, so far as truth does not fill the mind; a nourishing from without, so far as the fountain of Life does not gush forth from the living person himself.²⁷

Since we are unable to correct this chronic disobedience on our own, some gesture on God's part is necessary to overcome this lack of enlightenment and empowerment in an authentically human manner. "So from the start he has joined the oneness of the communion we must have with him to the means of realizing it: the mediation of the man Jesus Christ (1 Timothy ii, 5). Thus in communicating his life to us, God acts not according to *his* mode, but according to *ours*."²⁸

"[T]here is a dynamism coming from God for men through Christ."²⁹ This dynamism inaugurates a new creation, a new humanity. The dynamism is the power of God in His Spirit raising Christ from the dead as the firstborn of many brothers and sisters, and ultimately, of all creation (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18). "By faith we are given the unique certitude of being ourselves beneficiaries, ourselves sharers, in this total restoration. Yes, we shall ourselves be part of it: and that means the whole of us, not only our souls but our bodies as well."³⁰ Just as in our fallen condition we thought, felt, and acted like Adam (and Eve), so, in our transfigured condition, we receive power from God's Spirit to think, feel, and act like Christ. Based on St. Paul, Congar writes, "[T]he communication to us of the Holy Spirit corresponds to the effective development of what Christ must be and do in us."³¹ This transfiguration presupposing, of course, total continuity between the orders of creation and of redemption. Thus, the new creation means:

the cosmos of the first creation as submitted to the Spirit, who is the agent proper to the second creation, and transformed by him into the image of Christ's glorified body. . . . What matters to us here is that beneath these blissful changes there remains a substantial identity of subject, that which is to be changed is the

²⁶Yves Congar, "The Problem of Evil," in *God, Man, and the Universe*, ed. J. de Bivort de La Saudée (New York: P. J. Kennedy and Sons, 1954) 405.

²⁷Congar, *Jesus Christ*, 112.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 112-13, emphasis original.

²⁹Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Church*, trans. A. V. Littledale (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1960) 6, emphasis original.

³⁰Congar, "The Problem of Evil," 416.

³¹Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, trans. R. F. Trevett (Westminster MD: Newman Press 1962) 154, emphasis original.

same earthly cosmos with which we are associated as much in the order of the new creation as in that of the old, wherein we have to complete it.³²

It is in this sense that we speak of a restoration of all things (Acts 3:21).

Christ has essentially given us a renewed humanity, a practically new nature in the sense that the original one has been healed and elevated. Our participation in this nature is effected by the gift of the Holy Spirit given in baptism. "Baptism makes us put on Christ, that is, to enter under the influence of his Spirit; it makes us one body with him, because it animates us with his Spirit. Consequently, it is at Baptism and through Baptism that takes place the mystery of the passing from the first Adam to the second, from the 'psychic' to the 'pneumatic' mode of animation."³³

Congar finds that the biblical notion of "alliance" corresponds to the Hellenistic notion of "nature" which we are using here. Where, in Christ, we speak of a hypostatic union between God and humanity, the union between God and humanity in the giving of Christ's Spirit to us is not hypostatic. Instead, Congar describes it as a union of alliance, a new alliance, a covenantal union.³⁴ This union is not first between God and me; rather, the alliance is between God and we, the "we" who are the Church. Recalling Congar's understanding of the Church as a communion of persons, we can understand properly what he writes concerning this union of alliance in *The Mystery of the Church*:

For our present purpose, it is sufficient to point out that the Holy Spirit does not enter into composition with it as a form with matter, but united himself with it as with a subject already constituted in being. So it is that Scripture makes use of expressions which suggest the idea, not of a soul as a part of a composite being, but of one indwelling and acting: *to be with* always (John xvi. 16), *to be given* (ibid.), *to be present, to inhabit*, as if in a sanctuary, to be given by God as something one has (I Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19), and of which one can be filled. In addition, there are all the texts . . . where all kinds of operations are attributed to the Holy Spirit—bearing witness, causing a rebirth, praying, guiding, teaching, etc. It is clear that, if these operations imply what we may call an ontic ontology or physical production, the texts which express the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Church in terms of *habitation, being with*, imply an intersubjective ontology. The Holy Spirit does not inform the Church by entering into a physical composition with it to constitute a single substantial being which is both divine and human; he is with it to guide and assist it, to enable it to perform actions which, while outwardly human, are bearers of a divine virtue, *virtus Spiritus Sancti*.³⁵

³²Congar, *Jesus Christ*, 89.

³³Congar, *The Mystery of the Church*, 74.

³⁴Congar is using the French word "alliance." In French, it connotes a nuptial union. Unfortunately, our English use of the word is much more restrictive, and even bellicose.

³⁵Congar, "The Holy Spirit and the Apostolic Body," 171, emphasis original.

This alliance is perpetuated in history in the intimate bond between the Holy Spirit and the Church which Christ inaugurated in the new alliance he established in his person between humanity and God. The grounds of this new alliance "are the most stable, the most holy conceivable, because they are the products of God's will and faithfulness."³⁶ Through this alliance, the Holy Spirit provides "a stability and a real infallibility in matters which concern her existence as the New Eve, the Bride of Christ, his helpmeet [*sic*] in the work of the second creation, which is that of the redemption and communion between men and God in Jesus Christ."³⁷

The power of this new alliance is that dynamism coming from God to us through Christ. "Only God can lift us up to the life of God; only a 'dynamic' principle genuinely divine can direct and move us towards the objects of the divine life."³⁸ That principle is the Holy Spirit, "the dynamic power of this life of humanity moving Godwards. . . . He is the principle of this divine life which is determined by the 'dynamism' towards the objects of the life of God; He is the soul of the Church."³⁹ Essentially, the Spirit of the Risen Lord provides each member of the Church with enlightenment and empowerment. As a principle of action, the Spirit of God, who makes a person a child of God, also gives the person the power to act as a child of God by conformation to Christ. "The moving force, the animating principle, of everything Christian, everything holy, since Christ, is the Holy Spirit."⁴⁰

Relying upon the words of his Dominican master, St. Thomas Aquinas, Congar quotes at length a particular translation of Aquinas's commentary on 2 Cor. 3:17f. Most notable in this translation is the use of the word "dynamism" for the Latin "habitus." We will stand on Congar's expertise as a Thomist in accepting this nuance:

The free man is the one who belongs to himself; the slave, however, belongs to his master. Whoever acts spontaneously therefore acts freely, but whoever receives his impulse from another does not act freely. The man who avoids evil, not because it is an evil, but because of a law of the Lord's, is therefore not free. On the other hand, the man who avoids evil because it is an evil is free. It is here that the Holy Spirit works, inwardly perfecting our spirit by communicating to it a new dynamism, and this functions so well that man refrains from evil through love, as though divine law were ordering him to do this. He is therefore free not because he is not subject to divine law, but because his inner dynamism leads him to do what divine law prescribes.⁴¹

³⁶Congar, *The Revelation of God*, 152.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Congar, *The Mystery of the Church*, 102.

³⁹Ibid., 103.

⁴⁰Ibid., 7.

⁴¹IBHS, II:125.

In commenting on the passage, Congar notes that basically St. Thomas is simply explaining what happens under the new law, which "consists chiefly in the grace of the Holy Spirit" (S.T. I-II, q.108, a.1).

The Spirit is so much within us—in the cry "Father!," for example, it is the Spirit and us as well—and he is so much the weight or inclination of our love that he is our spontaneity intimately related to what is good. The decision to do the opposite is only an imperfection of a freedom insufficiently illuminated and filled with good. Christ, who could not sin, was entirely free. The Holy Spirit, who is Good and Love, compels us not only by leaving us free, but also by making us free, because he compels us from within and through *our very own* movement.⁴²

In contrast to our fallen condition, a dynamic alliance results from our being "born from above" or "born again" (Jn. 3:3). This change manifests itself primarily in a new set of cognitions, volitions, and actions. "Christianity is not a law, although it contains one, and it is not a morality, although it contains one. By the gift of the Spirit of Christ, it is an ontology of grace which involves, as its fruit or product, certain attitudes that are called for and even demanded by what we are."⁴³

III. THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND EMPOWERMENT OF CONSCIENCE

"What we are" are human persons, incarnate spirits. "Our bodies are themselves the temple of the Holy Spirit and they form a substantial unity with our souls or 'hearts.' We must therefore take very seriously those statements which claim that our bodies can be transfigured and are able, in their own way, to reflect God's glory and the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁴ Apart from this exterior transfiguration, though, the dynamism of the new alliance occurs primarily interiorly.

As St. Paul writes, "God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts" (Gal. 4:6). This is such a key passage for Congar that he uses it as the title for one of his chapters in IBHS. For our purposes, we will focus on a particular presentation within that chapter. He writes: "St Simeon the New Theologian, whom I could have also cited here, believed, as we have already seen in Volume I, that there has to be an experience of the Holy Spirit, who enables us to act and live. This was also clearly St Paul's conviction. For him, the Spirit acted in man's heart (see Rom 8:16; 9:1)."⁴⁵ In fact, looking at those two passages from Romans, we see that the word "heart" (Greek=*kardia*/καρδία) does not appear in either of them. First, Romans 8:16 reads: "The Spirit himself joins with our spirit to bear witness that we are children of God" (NJB) (*auto to pneuma*

⁴²Ibid., 125-26, emphasis original.

⁴³Ibid., 126.

⁴⁴Ibid., 82

⁴⁵Ibid.

symmarturei tō pneumati hēmōn hoti esmen tekna Theou). Clearly, Congar reads (human) "spirit" here as the something as "heart." Second, Romans 9:1 reads: "I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie; my conscience joins with the holy Spirit in bearing me witness." (NAB) (*Alētheian legō en Christō, ou psieudomai, symmarturousēs moi tēs syneidēseōs mou en pneumati hagiō*).⁴⁶ Clearly, Congar must be reading "conscience" here as the same as "heart." Therefore, biblically speaking, "heart" means "spirit" or "conscience." That Congar clearly intends to draw this conclusion is reinforced by the grammatical connection between these two particular verses. The verb "to bear witness with" (*symmartureō*) appears in both verses to show the intrinsic relationship the Holy Spirit has with our spirit, that is, with our conscience. If this literary connection holds, then usually we can interchange any of these three words where one of them might appear without changing the meaning of what is written. For example, if we were to substitute "conscience" in place of "heart" in Gal. 4:6, (or, to remain within Romans itself, Rom. 5:5), we could truthfully make this statement about pneumatological anthropology: "God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our [consciences]." Likewise, we could make a similar substitution in Romans 8:16: "The Spirit himself joins with our [conscience] to bear witness that we are children of God." While we have no intention of rewriting Sacred Scripture, these are just illustrations to make explicit what Congar left implicit. Instead, we can return to Aquinas' commentary on 2 Cor. 3:17f. Congar's particular translation lends itself to a substitution of the word "conscience" in place of "spirit." Reading the last half of that passage with this exchange exquisitely encapsulates the dynamic alliance which takes place between moral conscience and the Holy Spirit in a follower of Jesus Christ:

... It is here that the Holy Spirit works, inwardly perfecting our [conscience] by communicating to it a new dynamism, and this functions so well that man refrains from evil through love, as though divine law were ordering him to do this. He is therefore free not because he is not subject to divine law, but because his inner dynamism leads him to do what divine law prescribes.

Throughout his writings, Congar gives us several examples where "heart" or "spirit" is taken to mean more accurately "conscience."

- (1) The heart is the seat of the intellectual, affective, moral and religious life: the place where, at the level of a deep-lying disposition, God's initiative in our regard is welcomed or rejected. In modern parlance, perhaps "conscience" corresponds most closely to it, "soul" being a little too vague.⁴⁷

⁴⁶We are using two different translations because of the similarities in translations of these particular passages. Strangely, these similarities do not make the notice of the translators in either translation.

⁴⁷Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and Theological Essay*, trans. M. Neseby and T. Rainborough (London: Burns & Oates, 1966) 372.

- (2) Biblically speaking, the heart is that level of the conscience where man can no longer avoid the issue, no longer try to conceal his deepest needs by making a show of his possessions, where man is all but compelled to face himself, to see himself as he *is*, to give up the deceptive shelter of a spurious security, to take his stand in the direction of the ultimate realities.⁴⁸
- (3) The finality of the word of God decides its quality, as does its origin. If what we have is the word of *God* and if this word is intended to convert us, lead us to God and unite us with him, it is something other than objective information about things and it touches a different level in us from the one where we come to know "the elements of the world," in Paul's words (cf. Col 2:8). We have therefore to distinguish between an external and an inner word. It is in fact a touch, a disposition which is formed and makes itself known in the conscience (which is called the "heart" in the Bible). It is an inspiration in the sense of obedience to God. It is very like the way in which God brings prayer about in us.⁴⁹
- (4) . . . In different terms with their own particular nuances, the New Testament often expresses this obligation to retain or preserve the word so that it may bear fruit (*katechousin*: Lk 8:15; in the maor text of 11:28 the word *phulassein* is found). John prefers *tērein*, to keep faithfully. In two instances, both incomparable and spiritually succinct, Luke uses the same verb with a prefix. It is applied to Mary: "Mary kept all these things (words; the verb *suntērein*), pondering them in her heart" (2:19) and "His mother kept (*diatērein*) all these things in her heart" (2:51). Something more than a mere act of memory is meant here. What is involved is living faithfulness, not only of a spirit reflecting about what has been seen and heard, but of a conscience which draws on and respects the consequences and finally of a "heart" meditating on it and penetrating its depths. Life is nourished with the truth that has been received and retained, and the truth perceived is nourished by the experience of life.⁵⁰

The point of mentioning all these different places where Congar makes this connection is to show the intrinsic relationship between moral conscience and the Holy Spirit. This relationship is a dynamic alliance. Christian morality, seen from such a perspective, becomes a matter of enlightening and empowering moral conscience.

The highest degree of freedom is not to govern oneself, but to be wholly governed by God: not forgetting that, while God is outside and above us, he also dwells within us. Because he is God, he is in some sense within us physically; spiritually and morally he is within us through the free gift of his Holy Spirit "in our hearts" (Gal. 4:6). Thus it is *from within*, gently, that he moves us towards what is good, to the true good. The pressure or attraction under whose influence

⁴⁸Congar, *Jesus Christ*, 116, emphasis original.

⁴⁹Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, 22.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 26.

we act is the Holy Spirit himself. . . .⁵¹

IV. CONCLUSION

We have a confirmation that our main thesis about an intrinsic relationship between moral conscience and the Holy Spirit is correct in the remarkable similarity of descriptions of the work of the Holy Spirit in us in comparison to what conscience does in us. Specifically, "the first step in the work of the Holy Spirit is to convince us of our sins, to awaken in us a realization that we are not all that we should be and, with God's grace, could be. This is fundamental for repentance, the taproot, as it were, from which the fruits of the Holy Ghost, enumerated by St Paul, must spring (Galatians 5:22)."⁵² In our fallen condition, our initial experiences of conscience are exactly this: our failure to live up to God's call on our lives. As long as we continue in this world, we will struggle in the vicissitudes between sin and grace, the flesh and the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit acts within us or he penetrates into us like an anointing. He makes us, at a level that is deeper than that of mere regret for some fault, conscious of the sovereign attraction of the Absolute, the Pure and the True, and of a new life offered to us by the Lord, and he also gives us a clear consciousness of our own wretchedness and of the untruth and selfishness that fills our lives. We are conscious of being judged, but at the same time we are forestalled by forgiveness and grace, with the result that our false excuses, our self-justifying mechanisms and the selfish structure of our lives break down.⁵³

This first step in the work of the Holy Spirit is what we continue to need in our quest for Christian unity. Thanks to the endeavors of people such as Yves Congar, we can rejoice that this goal is closer today than when he first responded to his "ecumenical vocation" in the late 1920s.⁵⁴ But we still have a substantial road to travel towards full, visible unity. Therefore, assuming that our main thesis is compatible with the main bodies of Christian believers, we would be wise to heed any promptings to continue on the way to full communion by means of repentance. Congar writes, "No unitive endeavour can succeed unless it is based on a sense of our own guilt, of the ills we have inflicted on each other and an acknowledgement of it which really goes as far as the *mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*, of which Karl Adam speaks."⁵⁵ He continues, "We have a great deal to learn [about the history of Christian disunity] from an exact and objective

⁵¹Congar, "Holy Spirit and Spirit of Freedom," 14, emphasis original.

⁵²Congar, "The Call to Ecumenism and the Work of the Holy Spirit," 104.

⁵³IBHS, II:123.

⁵⁴For details on this, see the "Preface" in *Dialogue between Christians*.

⁵⁵Congar, "The Call to Ecumenism and the Work of the Holy Spirit," 103.

historical investigation and we greatly need the inner unction of the Holy Spirit who instills in us the psychological manifestation of truth which is humility."⁵⁶

Originally appearing in *La Vie Spirituelle* 82 (Jan. 1950) 5-12, we close with a very creative description of how the Holy Spirit works to bring about unity. Congar's article entitled, "The Call to Ecumenism and the Work of the Holy Spirit," reveals his confidence from early on that the dynamic alliance between human moral subjects and "the Lord and Giver of Life" would be the very force advancing the cause for Christian unity.

The call to refashion the unity of Christendom is everywhere at work in countless souls. In a few weeks or months, at most, we shall once more enjoy the sight of nature beginning her life-cycle afresh. How and by whom have all these seeds been put there; how do they continue to exploit the smallest plot of land in order to thrust down roots and send up shoots bearing foliage and fruit? The irresistible activity of the force we call life makes a magnificent spectacle as it spreads over the earth, fostered by the sun. The Holy Spirit is the sun of the soul and, at the same time, the wind "blowing where it will" (John 3:8), sowing the seed of its choice where no human hand has planted. He is also the life-thrust urging on its growth and he provides the soil to nourish it. The work and the mark of the Holy Spirit can be recognized by the fact that the men who do not know one another, or many various and apparently haphazard circumstances, should come together in the performance of some spiritual work in building up the Body of Christ. For it is in this way that he works. Men who gave no thought to it, together with uncoordinated happenings, are all made to serve the cause of unity, and that without any sort of violence or constraint; it is as though it were innate in them. *The Holy Spirit dwells within men's hearts, at the very centre of their being, and becomes himself their innermost inclination, their natural tendency. Himself immutable and unique, he is the living master of the impulse he imparts to each and makes all things converge upon that unity which is the proper outcome of his presence, for he is love.*⁵⁷

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⁵⁶Ibid., 104.

⁵⁷Ibid., 102, emphasis added.

CONGAR'S HOPE AND LAST WISH FOR ECUMENISM

I. A STORY

The late Yves M.-J. Cardinal Congar, O.P., had a fondness for antique cars. This seemingly incongruous taste was revealed to me in March 1966, in Boston. He had come to lecture on his return from the wonderful colloquium held that month at the University of Notre Dame on appraising the Vatican Council. As his host, facing a free afternoon, I gave him a choice of diversions: perhaps the Museum of Fine Arts, or the famous Freedom Trail of Boston's history, or even the Museum of Antique Cars in Brookline. "Les voitures!" he exclaimed. "Mais oui. Allons!" So off we went to inspect the remarkable collection of ancient automobiles. He was most impressed by a huge 1908 Renault touring car, complete with a discreet toilette for those times before service stations. It was probably not designed in Limoges and thus a Limousine, but more likely in Sedan. Sedan was Congar's birthplace 92 years ago.

Congar's lecture at Boston University School of Theology was the last of four presented as the famous Lowell Lectures. These were evaluations of the Vatican Council from different perspectives. In addition to the view of the council's most notable *peritus*, there were those of Orthodox Metropolitan James of Philadelphia in Asia Minor, Lutheran George Lindbeck of Yale, and myself as representative of Protestant ecumenism. At the time, the archbishop was writing his doctoral dissertation on Congar's ecclesiology. Congar's lecture on "Scripture and Tradition" touched the nerve of the council's deliberations. He spoke in a decade when there was a process of convergence within much of Christian theology, a process of much importance for Christian ecumenism. Continuing today, the process is the conjoining of two authenticating sources of the fundamental doctrines of Christian faith: Holy Scripture and tradition. For many since the sixteenth century, there has been a polarized, or mutually exclusive, relationship. In post-Reformation belief as held by many Protestants, the principle of *sola Scriptura* completely suppressed the holy tradition of the Church. Tradition was considered a merely human invention. In the English homilies it was called the "stinking puddles" of belief. Opposed was the belief that went to the opposite extreme. The overcoming of an either-or polarity of these two authorities has been one of the major achievements of this closing century. This victory of faith and intellect over blind dogmatism was enabled by

much scholarship and manifested decisively by both the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order at Montreal, 1963, and the Second Vatican Council.

In his Lowell Lecture, Congar declared, "In the history of Catholic dogma, there is no dogma that is founded on Scripture alone, nor is there any dogma that is founded on Tradition alone." Consider the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. "Nowhere," he said,

in Sacred Scripture does it say explicitly that the Holy Spirit is personally God. St. Paul wrote a dozen trinitarian doxologies; and there are numerous clues, suggestions and intimations in the New Testament. But it took three centuries of Christians' experience, liturgy and theological disputations before the Eastern and Western Church Fathers could reach a consensus at Constantinople, 381, on the Spirit's relation to the Father and the Son.

On this, many Protestants agree with the Orthodox and Catholics. The agreement is itself the Holy Spirit's work in the Church. But Congar adhered, of course, to the Roman Catholic doctrine that a third authority is needed in addition to Scripture and tradition, namely, the *magisterium* of the Roman Church. Closer and closer as we have come, therefore, the ecumenical congruence is not yet a state of *consensus doctrinae*.

II. THE FILIOQUE CONTROVERSY

There is one aspect of Christian teaching on the Holy Spirit which has been a major bone of contention for sixteen centuries. It is the matter of the phrase *filioque* in the third article of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. Vast numbers of faithful Christians are unaware of the existence of this problem. And it requires a most astute teacher of theology's history to explain to those who have not grasped the issue why the credal profession of the Holy Spirit's proceeding "from the Father *and the Son*" is worth serious debate. Even so, we know that the phrase has epitomized the deplorable chasm separating the Eastern and Western churches. Volume 3 of Congar's trilogy on the Holy Spirit rehearses the sad and confusing history.¹ The Orthodox have stoutly insisted on two categorical objections to the phrase. First, it was never agreed upon at the Council of Constantinople; so its subsequent insertion by the Latin West was illicit. Second, the phrase implies the reduction of the Holy Spirit to a category of subordination or inferiority to the Son, Jesus Christ. It jeopardizes the full and undivided unity of God as three Persons, and also accounts for elevating Jesus Christ in Christian belief to a doctrine of Christomonism, while neglecting the Spirit in the experience of believers.

This might be regarded as the sin against the Holy Spirit, which Jesus himself singled out as unforgivable (Mt. 12:32). To counter this latter criticism, Latin scholars have demonstrated alternate expressions used in medieval

¹IBHS, III.

theology, such as "The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son."² This variant was seriously proposed and agreed upon at the Council of Florence in 1439 as a basis for Orthodox and Roman unity; but it failed to be ratified by the Orthodox back East, and discussions were terminated by the disastrous fall of Constantinople in 1453.

Five hundred years after that debacle, the ecumenical movement has provided the context for a new effort to reconcile Orthodox and Catholics. Of course, meanwhile, Protestantism has arisen as a third bloc. The new Christian historiography, biblical exegesis and hermeneutics have been pointing toward a resolution of the ancient and perennial standoff. What these scholarly findings have been showing is that, with the best of intentions to be faithful Christians, people emphasized differing aspects of God's nature and efficacy in such ways as to cause distorted, unbalanced, or fragmented understandings of the whole Christian faith.

The distortions of Trinitarian faith have affected Western churches more than Eastern, and Protestants more than Catholics. In very general terms, they may be characterized by three kinds of unitarianism, as H. Richard Niebuhr used to say. They are monisms of the three Persons of the Trinity where devotion to one Person is so magnified as to exclude the other two. The three variations do not necessarily conform to the lines defining particular communions or denominations. The first kind are Unitarians, deliberately so named, but implicitly identified by all who reject traditional Christology and pneumatology. In the first are "patromonists" and in the second "Christomonists" or those accused of "Jesusolatry." Their piety, theology, and proclamation are dominated by the Person and the Cross of Jesus Christ and the redemption He wrought for believers. The third, of course, are the "spiritual" believers who may range from the "inner light" Quakers to Pentecostals. While the religious and moral values of these three types may be genuine for their adherents, it is hard to claim that they separately express the apostolicity and catholicity of the one Church of Christ. And they further complicate the way of giving visible expression to the unity of the Church.

For all of his strong motivation for advancing ecumenical unity and concord among divided Christians, the young Congar had little expectation or hope for varieties of Protestant communions. He wrote of Protestants in 1936 that they do not seem able or likely "to realize any unity except reduction to a common denominator in which Christianity is limited to little more than the purely natural perceptions of the human mind."³ To this devastating judgment on both sectarianism and liberalism, Congar found an exception in Anglicanism insofar as it was also called Protestant. And his estimate of some other communions and con-

²Ibid.

³Yves Congar, *Divided Christendom*, trans. M. A. Bonsfield (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1939) 131.

fessions would have increased by the time of the Second Vatican Council, when he helped arrange and welcome the participation of a variety of those observers, including even liberal Protestants.

Congar was far more sanguine about the possibility of narrowing the gulf which had separated the Orthodox and Roman Churches for nearly a millennium. To be sure, these were not separated because of the *filioque* issue alone, nor even by the papacy alone. There has been a long, dreary history of contention over political and national claims of both Byzantium and Rome. But the *filioque* came by the eleventh century to symbolize all the causes of the great schism. Archbishop Damaskinos is quoted approvingly by Congar: "From the fourth century onwards, the *Filioque* came to form a part of the Western tradition, but it was never regarded as an obstacle to union until that union was ended for other reasons."⁴ That is a strong statement by a respected Orthodox leader, but it is largely supported by Congar's erudition, notwithstanding an exception for the strong insistence by Patriarch Photius in the ninth century that *filioque* was entirely objectionable.⁵

Sixty years ago, long before he had gathered all the historical and literary evidence, Congar became convinced that the *filioque* controversy could be brought to an end. In an appendix to his book *Chrétiens Désunis*, he made a brief case for the conviction "that the *Filioque* does not constitute an insuperable obstacle to the reunion of East and West in the unity of the faith."⁶ This was a bold and prophetic statement to make at that time. But his scholarly research and ecumenical engagement during the ensuing years served to strengthen the foundations of his opinion. These years also included the long period of his virtual exile and suppression by the Vatican under Pope Pius XII in 1947, until Pope John XXIII restored and elevated Congar to prominence at the council. From the imposed silence he emerged as a most influential author and interpreter of sections of several conciliar constitutions and decrees. The *Decree on Ecumenism* is a special manifestation of his influence and authorship. In its section on Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Decree expresses a lenient attitude toward what it calls a "legitimate variety" of theological formulations. It readily acknowledges that "one tradition has come nearer than the other to an apt appreciation of certain aspects of a revealed mystery, or has expressed them in a clearer manner." The statement continues, "These various theological formulations are often to be considered as complementary rather than conflicting." In a footnote, editor Walter Abbott, S.J., writes that Pope Paul himself has substituted the cautious words "often to be considered as complementary . . ." for the original "considered more as complementary rather than conflicting."⁷

⁴IBHS, III:202.

⁵Ibid., 58.

⁶Congar, *Divided Christendom*, 283.

⁷*The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter J. Abbott (New York: America Press, 1966)

Whichever one prefers, it goes without saying that the doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit was in the writers' minds.

III. TIME FOR A SOLUTION

The year 1981 marked the 1,600th anniversary of the Council of Constantinople. It was an appropriate year not only to commemorate the third article of the Creed but also to initiate some action which would bring to an end the divisive dispute over *filioque*. Clearly, it was in Congar's mind a propitious moment, a *kairos*, for decisive action. The occasion was a conference at the Vatican on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Pope John Paul II had planned to convene this conference in 1981, but the bullet of a would-be assassin severely injured the pope that year and sent him to a hospital. The conference was thus postponed until March 1982. I was honored to be invited to be one of the approximately three hundred participants. These persons included some Orthodox and Protestant theologians who were recognized for their activity in the ecumenical movement.⁸

It was evident to all that the most respected person present was Congar. The French original of his trilogy had recently been published and his prestige among ecumenical theologians was at its highest. During the week when many papers were presented, Congar's idea of what could be done to resolve discord over the *filioque* was revealed: not to end the discussion of the implications of the differing concepts of the inner-Trinitarian relationships, but to neutralize the question as a cause of ecclesial division in the Body of Christ. He proposed that the conferees unanimously ask the pope to make a pronouncement, possibly by means of an encyclical letter. It would explain to all Catholics, and indirectly to all Christians, that the inclusion of the *filioque* has never been a dogma of the Church. Nearly thirteen centuries of usage in catechesis and liturgy have made it appear to carry the weight of dogma, since it was adopted by the Council of Toledo in the sixth century and its subsequent spread in the West. But Toledo was a regional, not an ecumenical, council. There were, in fact, many regional councils held in the Middle Ages. Toledo's decision could not modify the Creed of 381, promulgated by a recognized ecumenical council.

To illustrate this central point, the pope could follow a suggestion of Congar's. It would be a dramatic device to convince all Catholics that, regardless of the familiarity and wide, uncritical acceptance of the phrase, Catholics as late as the ninth century were not reciting it. The suggestion was that the pope should order the Vatican Museum to allow the removal to St. Peter's basilica of two silver scrolls cast in the year 810.⁹ These were created by order of Pope Leo III to hang on either side of the high altar in old St. Peter's. They bore the Greek

360.

⁸*Credo in Spiritum Sanctum*, International Theological Congress on Pneumatology, 2 vols (Vatican: Liberia Editrice, 1983).

⁹IBHS, III:54-57.

and Latin texts of the Creed without the *filioque*. They were the pope's answer to a strong initiative of no less a potentate than Emperor Charlemagne to dogmatize the word. The display of this historical evidence, thought Congar, would be described appropriately by news media, the better to publicize the proposed papal announcement.

Protestant participants in that 1982 conference were sympathetic toward Congar's proposal. To be sure, some theologians have followed the lead of Karl Barth in affirming the theological value of retaining *filioque*.¹⁰ Barth was persuaded by the ancient interpretation which St. Augustine gave to the mystery of the Trinity: namely, that the Holy Spirit is the *vinculum caritatis*, the bond of eternal Love that unites the eternal Father and Son. This has been a popular understanding by Protestant theological teachers. Ironically, it seems, their intention has been the same as in Eastern theology, which is to assert the complete, consubstantial unity of the three Persons; whereas the Orthodox rejection of *filioque* is justified by the same concern. And yet, it cannot be disputed that this Western tradition has implied for many Christians the subordination of the Spirit to the Son.

In spite of Barth's great influence on Protestant ecumenical theology, his defense of *filioque* has steadily decreased during the past fifty years. This has been due to the increasing encounter with Eastern Orthodox theologians within the common studies and conferences of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. The teaching of Orthodoxy has been heard in an unprecedented way and largely assimilated. Catholic theologians also have been participants in these inquiries and discussions since 1968. A significant succession of Faith and Order studies on Confessing the Apostolic Faith led inexorably to a common mind on "suppressing the *filioque*" (to use Congar's expression). Meetings on this issue were held in 1978 and 1979, leading to a remarkable consensus. As they recommended: "That the original form of the third article of the Creed, without the *filioque*, should everywhere be recognized as the normative one and restored, so that the whole Christian people may be able, in this formula, to confess their common faith in the Holy Spirit."¹¹ Among essays written for this study, Jurgen Moltmann's was strongly in favor of adhering to the original text, as he also said as a participant at the 1982 Vatican conference. In his 1992 book *The Spirit of Life*, Moltmann makes a thorough case against Barth's endorsement.¹²

¹⁰Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, trans. G. T. Thomson (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1936) I:546-53.

¹¹"The Filioque Clause in Ecumenical Perspective," in *Documentary History of Faith and Order, 1963-1993*, ed. Guenther Gassmann (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993) 189. See also *Spirit of God—Spirit of Christ: Ecumenical Reflections on the Filioque Controversy*, ed. Lukas Vischer (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981).

¹²Jurgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, trans. M. Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1992) 996-97.

Other important evidence of a change in Western, non-Catholic theology is the decision of the Anglican Communion to delete *filioque* from *The Book of Common Prayer*. But it is taking some years to effect this change in liturgical usage.

IV. SUMMARY

In summary, Congar's proposal in 1982 was not a startling innovation. On the final day of the conference, Pope John Paul came to the hall, accompanied by Cardinals Ratzinger and Casaroli. In his greetings, the pope was very courteous to the Lutherans, Reformed, Methodists, and other Protestants, and especially to the Orthodox. When he alluded to the Creed, for example, he deliberately pre-faced his comment by the words, "As it was said at Constantinople," and then said, "the Spirit, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father. . . ." His sensitivity was quite obvious to the Orthodox and the rest of us.

After John Paul had spoken, he greeted some of us in a most cordial manner. I note especially the strength of his grip despite his long stay in the hospital. As we left the hall, I met Bill Lazareth, the director of the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order office in Geneva. We had agreed to have lunch, but he excused himself by saying casually, "I'm sorry, but I have to eat with the pope!" Someone had advised the pope that morning of Congar's proposal to dramatize the so-called suppression of the *filioque*. Spontaneously, the pope invited Congar and some others to an intimate lunch. The others included Metropolitan Damaskinos of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Metropolitan Georges Khodr of Lebanon, and Archbishop Martini of Milan. Later, I asked Lazareth how it went. He said the pope had been quite deferential to Congar, listening to his proposal sympathetically. But he said the matter should be discussed with the Holy Office. Lazareth had the impression that the pope seemed to respect Congar's idea. Hearing this, I felt a thrill at being part of an event which could have a historical effect upon ecumenical relations East and West.

When would a word about this be spoken by the pope? Would intimation of it be introduced into the official dialogue between the Vatican and Orthodox Churches? Due to limited access to appropriate journals, I have perhaps missed some report or comment. But in May 1986, four years later, there came news of the pope's fifth encyclical letter, *Dominum et vivificantem* (*Lord and Giver of Life*). Surely, I thought, this would be the Pope's way of announcing the end of the controversy. I was excited, therefore, to read the first paragraph, because it cites the sixteenth centennial of the promulgation of the Creed. The pope writes, "We are called anew by the ever ancient and ever new faith of the Church to draw near to the Holy Spirit. . . . We are helped and stimulated also by the heritage we share with the Oriental Churches, which have jealously guarded the

extraordinary riches of the teachings of the Fathers on the Holy Spirit."¹³ Reading this, I thought, now is the time, Your Holiness. But, no. Not here. For then he describes, "The present Encyclical on the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son."¹⁴ As an ever optimistic ecumenist, I believe that Cardinal Congar's great wish will come true. It is deplorable that it did not happen in time for him to enjoy the satisfaction.

Cardinal Congar did not live to learn of the most promising sign of the fulfillment of his wish and hope. He died in Paris on 22 June 1995 at age ninety-one. A week later, a historic meeting took place in St. Peter's Basilica between Pope John Paul II and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholemew I. It was the first visit of an Ecumenical Patriarch to Italy since 1439 in Florence. In his homily the pope advocated the clarification of "the traditional doctrine of *Filioque*, present in the Latin version of the *Credo* in order to highlight its full harmony with what the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople of 381 confesses in its creed: the Father as the source of the whole Trinity, the one origin of both the Son and of the Holy Spirit."¹⁵ The pope commissioned a critical study of the matter for consideration by the ongoing dialogue with Orthodox, which states:

The Catholic Church acknowledges the conciliar, ecumenical, normative and irrevocable value, as expression of the one common faith of the Church and of all Christians, of the Symbol professed in Greek in Constantinople in 381 by the Second Ecumenical Council. No profession of faith peculiar to a particular liturgical tradition can contradict this expression of the faith taught and professed by the undivided Church.¹⁶

This is most hopeful. Those silver scrolls may yet be hung in St. Peter's!

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¹³John Paul II, *Dominum et vivificantem (Lord and Giver of Life)* (Washington: USCC, 30 May 1986) 3.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 5-6.

¹⁵Information Service of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City, no. 89 (1995/II-III) pp. 88-92.

¹⁶*Ibid.*